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ABSTRACT

This manual, in workbook format, introduces the principles of how to conduct an effective employee performance appraisal in the higher education setting. It uses several case studies to illustrate these principles. It is designed to be used for individual study or group workshops and seminars. The topics discussed include establishing a positive work climate and preparing employees for performance appraisal; ways to prepare for more effective appraisals, with a focus on goals, standards, attitudes, self-appraisal, and appraisal discussion models; conducting the appraisal, including effective communication with the employee, discussing unsatisfactory performance, questioning techniques, personal development, supervisor self-assessment, and closing the appraisal discussion; and follow-up, including a performance appraisal checklist and a personal action plan. (CK)

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EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS for Quality Student Service

Robert B. Maddux

**American Association of Collegiate Registrars
and Admissions Officers**

Staff Training and Development Series

EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

For Quality Student Service

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The Staff Training and Development Series is based on the premise that the success of any program lies with the individuals involved and comes about not by accident but through careful training and development. In keeping with its commitment to leadership and professional development, AACRAO offers, through this skill-building program, the opportunity to learn . . .

- to serve,
- to lead,
- to provide opportunities and ideas,
- to interact with others positively, and
- to care.

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PREFACE

This book is for anyone who directs the activities of others. Whether a first line supervisor, a dean, director, or a vice president, you must be able to effectively discuss performance with those who report to you.

Leading a performance appraisal review can be either difficult and depressing; or dynamic and positive. The attitude, planning, and approach of the person conducting the review will make the difference.

This book will help you to think through the appraisal process, and then learn how to conduct discussions that encourage positive relationships and improved individual performances. Those who master the concepts presented will benefit from reduced stress and improved productivity.

You will have a chance to do some self-analysis which will identify personal strengths and weaknesses. Once learned, the application of the skills is up to you.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS is not like most books. It stands out from other books in an important way. It's not a book to read—it's a book to *use*. The unique "self-paced" format of this book and the many worksheets encourage a reader to get involved and try some new ideas immediately.

This book will introduce the critical building blocks of how to conduct an effective performance appraisal. Using the simple yet sound techniques presented can make a dramatic change in one's productivity, accomplishments and job satisfaction.

EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS (and the other books listed at the end of this book) can be used effectively in a number of ways. Here are some possibilities:

—Individual Study. Because the book is self-instructional, all that is needed is a quiet place, some time and a pencil. By completing the activities and exercises, a reader should not only receive valuable feedback, but also practical steps for self-improvement.

—Workshops and Seminars. The book is ideal for assigned reading prior to a workshop or seminar. With the basics in hand, the quality of the participation will improve and more time can be spent on concept extensions and applications during the program. The book is also effective when it is distributed at the beginning of a session, and participants "work through" the contents.

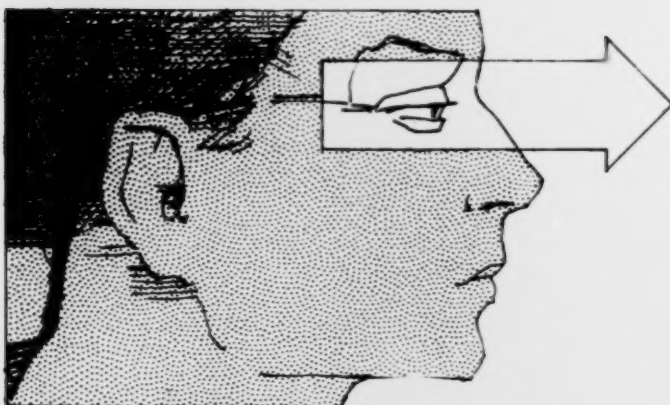
There are several other possibilities that depend on the objectives, program or ideas of the user. One thing for sure, even after it has been read, this book will be looked at—and thought about—again and again.

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PART I

ARE YOU READY FOR BETTER APPRAISALS?





SOME OBJECTIVES FOR THE READER

Before you begin this book, give some thought to your objectives.

Objectives give us a sense of direction, a definition of what we plan to accomplish, and a feeling of fulfillment when they are achieved.

Check the objectives that are important to you. Then, when you have completed the book, review your objectives and enjoy the sense of achievement you will feel.

AFTER READING AND PRACTICING THE CONCEPTS IN THIS BOOK,
YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

- ☐ establish a work climate conducive to productive performance appraisals;
- ☐ initiate and maintain positive communication about work performance versus work expectations;
- ☐ help your employees prepare properly for performance appraisal;
- ☐ prepare and conduct performance discussions that encourage an exchange of information and produce better results;
- ☐ follow through properly on agreements reached with the employee.

A PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROVIDES A PERIODIC OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE PERSON WHO ASSIGNS THE WORK, AND THE PERSON WHO PERFORMS IT, TO DISCUSS WHAT THEY EXPECT FROM THE OTHER AND HOW WELL THOSE EXPECTATIONS ARE BEING MET.

Performance appraisals are not adversary proceedings, or social chit-chat. They are an essential communication link between two people with a common purpose.

Leading these discussions is not always easy, but the principles and techniques for effective sessions can be learned and applied by anyone.



MAKE YOUR CHOICE NOW

SUCCESSES

Supervisors who engage in mutual goal setting.

Supervisors who publicly recognize positive performance, and privately correct improper performance when it occurs.

Supervisors who establish clear, measurable expectations, and provide a climate conducive to success.

Supervisors who ask questions, listen carefully and appreciate the ideas of others.

Supervisors who follow through to insure commitments are met.

Add from your own experience:

FAILURES

Those who establish arbitrary, unilateral performance goals and/or standards.

Those who spend too much time looking for things that are wrong and too little looking for things that are right.

Those who have not thought through what they expect or don't know how to measure success. Those who provide a threatening atmosphere in which to work.

Those who never seek the ideas of others or listen, yet have a solution for everyone else's problems.

Those who do not take their own commitments seriously.

Add from your own experience:

A good performance appraisal leaves both parties feeling they have gained something.

DO YOU TEND TO PUT OFF PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS?

Too often performance appraisals are left until the last minute and then done in a hurried manner. When this occurs, the results are poor. The supervisor feels guilty, and the employee unimportant and let down.

The facing page lists several advantages of doing thoughtful performance appraisals when they are due. Check those that are important to you.



WHAT CAN WELL PLANNED PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS DO FOR ME?

People responsible for performance appraisals often assign a low priority to them because they have not thought about the benefits of a good appraisal session. Following are some advantages of doing a professional appraisal on a timely basis. Check ☒ those that are important to you.

- ☐ 1. Performance appraisals give me valuable insights into the work being done and those who are doing it.
- ☐ 2. When I maintain good communication with others about job expectations and results, opportunities are created for new ideas and improved methods.
- ☐ 3. When I do a good job appraising performance, anxiety is reduced because employees know how they are doing.
- ☐ 4. I increase productivity when employees receive timely corrective feedback on their performance.
- ☐ 5. I reinforce sound work practices and encourage good performance when I publicly recognize positive contributions.
- ☐ 6. When I encourage two way communication with employees, goals are clarified so they can be achieved or exceeded.
- ☐ 7. Regular appraisal sessions remove surprises about how the quality of work is being perceived.
- ☐ 8. Learning to do professional performance appraisals is excellent preparation for advancement and increased responsibility.

Research reflects that more than half the professional and clerical employees working today do not understand how their work is evaluated. If this could be true of your employees, familiarize them with the process now and tell every new employee how they will be evaluated when they begin work.

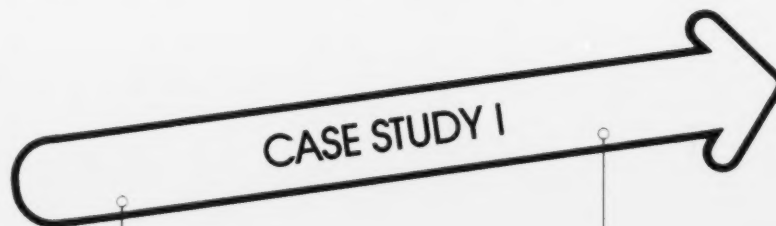
Performance appraisal discussions are normally initiated by the supervisor, but are also appropriate when employees request a meeting to determine how well you think they are doing.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

Check ☒ those that apply to you.

- ☐ 1. Appraisal discussions should be scheduled on a regular basis by either institutional policy or the supervisor.
- ☐ 2. Less formal discussions may be conducted whenever the nature of the assignment or other circumstances make it meaningful to do so.
- ☐ 3. Supervisors should provide praise for achievement whenever appropriate, and take prompt action to correct unsatisfactory performance when it occurs.
- ☐ 4. Appraisal activities handled at a propitious moment may be recalled later during a more formal, scheduled review for reinforcement.
- ☐ 5. Follow-up discussions after a formal appraisal provide the opportunity for a broader review if needed.



Case studies provide insights about the content that has been, or is about to be, presented.

The first case (on the facing page) will help you understand some of the ground work necessary to achieve a successful performance appraisal.

CASE STUDY 1

WHO WILL BE THE BEST AT PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS?

Janice and Fletcher are new supervisors attending their first training workshop. They have not covered material on performance appraisals yet, but are discussing their personal philosophies about them over lunch. Janice doesn't believe a fair performance appraisal can be made of an employee's work unless assignments have been discussed, and expectations agreed upon in advance. She thinks work should be assigned in measurable terms so both she and the employee can track performance as the work progresses.

Fletcher thinks this approach is dangerous. He feels employees should be given only a general idea of what is to be accomplished. He thinks employees who participate in establishing performance objectives will set them too low. He prefers to leave performance expectations vague to see what the employees accomplish on their own. If their standards don't measure up, he will let them know then and there.

Who do you think will be the best at performance appraisals?

- ☐ Janice
Because _____

- ☐ Fletcher
Because _____

Turn to page 68 for the author's views.

PART II

HOW TO PREPARE FOR MORE EFFECTIVE APPRAISALS



WHAT IS MEANT BY GOALS AND STANDARDS?

The appraisal process starts when the employee and supervisor reach a mutual understanding of what needs to be accomplished. If expectations are not clearly stated, mutually understood and presented in measurable terms; performance will be difficult to evaluate.

Goals and standards are methods by which job expectations can be expressed. Those responsible for performance appraisals need a good understanding of goals and standards, and how to use them during the appraisal process.

If you agree with the definitions and examples below. Check ☒ the appropriate boxes.

GOALS

- ☐ A **goal** is a statement of results which are to be achieved. Goals describe: (1) conditions that will exist when the desired outcome has been accomplished; (2) a time frame during which the outcome is to be completed; and (3) resources the institution is willing to commit to achieve the desired result.

Goals should be challenging, but achievable and established with the participation of those responsible for meeting them. Here is an example:

"To increase the volume of transcript requests processed by 20% per day without any increase in personnel."

Once accomplished, a new goal can be established to emphasize the next set of desired results.

STANDARDS

- ☐ A **standard** refers to an ongoing performance criteria that must be met time and time again. Standards are usually expressed quantitatively, and refer to such things as attendance, requests processed, files reviewed, timeliness of notification letters, etc. They are the most effective when established with the participation of those who must meet them. Here is an example:

"The registrar's filing backlog should not exceed one day. Any record requested should be available within five minutes of the request."

In general, goals apply more to managers and professional employees who engage in individualized projects. Standards are more common for workers engaged in routine, repetitive tasks.

When employees participate in setting goals and standards, there should be no mystery about how their performance will be judged. Employees cannot say, "Why didn't you tell me that's what you wanted?"; or, "Who dreamed up these impossible standards?"

Since goals and/or standards are the primary criteria by which performance will be measured, it is worth reviewing them. Please complete the exercise on the facing page.

IDENTIFYING GOALS AND STANDARDS

In the following list of statements, place a ☐ G if it is a goal and an ☐ S in the box if it is a standard according to the definitions on page 17. If the statement is neither a goal nor a standard, leave the ☐ blank. Answers are at the bottom of the page.

- ☐ 1. Transcripts and test scores should be filed in a timely manner.
- ☐ 2. To eliminate maintenance coding errors for existing computer programs by October 1, at a cost not to exceed 40 work hours.
- ☐ 3. Reduce the cost of outgoing telephone calls by January 1.
- ☐ 4. Telephones are to be answered quickly, and messages taken when necessary.
- ☐ 5. To reduce printing costs by 10% before November 15, at a one-time cost not to exceed \$8,000 for DTP hardware and software.
- ☐ 6. To increase freshman deposits by 10% before June 1, with no increase in expense.
- ☐ 7. Reduce absenteeism appreciably by year end.
- ☐ 8. Errors in recording class enrollment will not exceed 2% of the total monthly enrollment.
- ☐ 9. Telephones should be answered after no more than two rings. Telephone manners are expected to follow those prescribed in the office handbook. Messages should include date, time of call, relevant names and numbers, and the nature of the call.
- ☐ 10. To increase Western Region applications by 10% by year end at an increased recruiting cost of less than \$165,000.

ANSWERS:
 Items 2, 5, 6 and 10 are measurable goals.
 Items 8 and 9 are measurable standards.
 Items 1, 3, 4 and 7 are neither goals nor standards.

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD PEOPLE
DETERMINES OUR APPROACH TO
PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

Some supervisors do performance appraisals well because their attitude towards people set them on a positive course. Others are less successful because their attitude creates a negative climate. The next page describes 3 different attitudes. Which one best describes you?



ATTITUDES AND PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

CHECK ☒ THE ONE THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOU.

- ☐ **"I know best."**—This person feels work should be done by controlling the people who do it. Employees are told what to do, how to do it, and when to stop. Then they are told what they did wrong and what they did right; where they are weak, and where they are strong. The person in charge feels this is justified because of his or her superior knowledge and ability. This attitude does not invite new ideas or challenge people. Communication is directed one way only.
- ☐ **"I'll set the goals, you meet them."**—This person feels that because of superior knowledge, ability or experience, it is O.K. to set goals for others to meet. The worker is given an opportunity to discuss ways to meet goals, but has no input into the actual performance objectives. Performance is evaluated on how well original goals were achieved, regardless of how realistic they were.
- ☐ **"Let's review the work together, establish some realistic goals and evaluate performance accordingly."**—This person emphasizes work performance, not employee characteristics. The idea is to help workers evaluate the usefulness of their ideas; recognize their weaknesses; and exploit their strengths. The supervisor acts as a resource and coach, rather than as a judge.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE APPRAISER

Personal characteristics influence how we do as appraisers. Now is a good time to evaluate your appraisal skills. Complete the assessment on the facing page.

Commit now to improving your skills in any area indicated by your ratings.



CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE APPRAISER

The following personal characteristics support effective performance appraisals. This scale will help identify your strengths, and determine areas where improvement would be beneficial. Circle the number that best reflects where you fall on the scale. The higher the number, the more the characteristic describes you. When you have finished, total the numbers circled in the space provided.

1. I like being responsible for productivity.	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. I like people, and enjoy talking with them.	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. I don't mind giving criticism of a constructive nature.	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. I give praise freely when it is earned.	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. I am not intimidated by workers who tell me what they really think.	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. I seek new ideas and use them whenever possible.	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
7. I respect the knowledge and skill of the people who work for me.	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. I follow up to be sure commitments, goals and standards are being met.	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
9. I am sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
10. I am not worried by employees who know more about their work than I do.	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
TOTAL _____										

A score between 90 and 100 indicates you have excellent characteristics to conduct effective appraisals. A score between 70 and 89 indicates that you have significant strengths, but also some improvement needs. Scores between 50 and 69 reflect a significant number of problem areas. Scores below 50 call for a serious effort to improve. Make a special effort to grow in any area where you scored 6 or less, regardless of your total score. (You might wish to get feedback from employees on how they see you on these traits.)

LEADING A PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL
DISCUSSION CAN BE COMPARED TO
BASEBALL

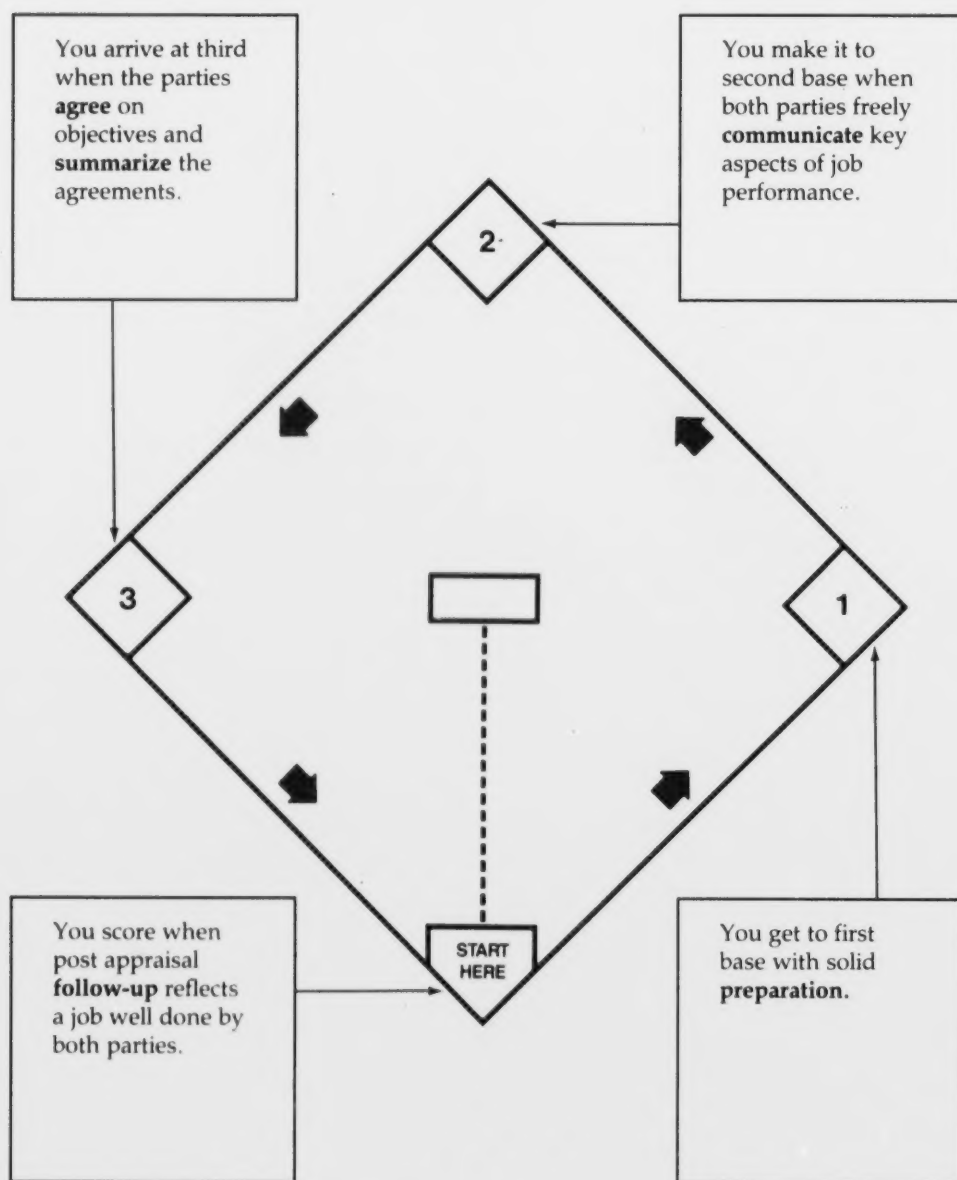
(You don't have to be a fan to make it work.)

- Every session requires a team effort and a game plan.
- Winning depends on how well the team has prepared.
- Each player needs a turn at bat.
- Four basic essentials (bases) need to be covered in each meeting to achieve maximum results.



REMEMBER TO TOUCH THE BASES

COVER ALL THE BASES



**PREPARATION BY AN EMPLOYEE FOR THE
APPRAISAL DISCUSSION IS AS IMPORTANT AS
THAT OF THE MANAGER.**

The appraisal discussion should be a structured and planned interpersonal meeting, not a casual conversation.

A specific time, agreeable to both parties, should be reserved.

Topics for discussion should be known in advance so the participants can prepare accordingly.

Help employees prepare by providing them with an advance copy of "Self-Appraisal Questions for Employees" printed on the next page.

SELF-APPRAISAL QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

These questions can help you prepare for your performance appraisal. As you read each question, think about your performance; your progress; and your plans for future growth.

1. What critical abilities does my job require? To what extent do I fulfill them?
2. What do I like best about my job? Least?
3. What were my specific accomplishments during this appraisal period?
4. Which goals or standards did I fall short of meeting?
5. How could my supervisor help me do a better job?
6. Is there anything that the institution or my supervisor does that hinders my effectiveness?
7. What changes would improve my performance?
8. Does my present job make the best use of my capabilities? How could I become more productive?
9. What do I expect to be doing five years from now?
10. Do I need more experience or training in any aspect of my current job? How could it be accomplished?
11. What have I done since my last appraisal to prepare myself for more responsibility?
12. What new goals and standards should be established for the next appraisal period? Which old ones need to be modified or deleted?
13. Did my supervisor provide feedback on my work performance throughout the year?
14. Did I communicate my questions and/or concerns about my work performance with my supervisor during the past year?

A TIP ON HOW TO GET TO FIRST BASE:

THOROUGH PREPARATION BY THE MANAGER!

WHEN A PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL GOES
POORLY, IT IS USUALLY BECAUSE THE
SUPERVISOR HAS NOT PREPARED PROPERLY,
OR COMPLETELY, OR HAS NOT GIVEN THE
EMPLOYEE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PREPARE.



MANAGERIAL PREPARATION FOR PLANNING THE APPRAISAL

Prior to conducting a performance appraisal, identify and develop items to be covered. Since employee performance in the current job is the central issue, gather relevant data concerning job requirements and the established goals or standards. Next, assess the employee's performance on the above for the appraisal period. Then:

1. Review the job requirements to be sure you are fully conversant with them.
2. Review the goals and standards you previously discussed and agreed upon with the employee, (plus any notes you have relating to their achievement).
3. Review the employee's history including:
 - job skills
 - training
 - experience
 - special or unique qualifications
 - past jobs and job performance
4. Evaluate job performance versus job expectations for the period being appraised, and rate it according to your institution's scale.
5. Note any variances in the employee's performance that need to be discussed. Provide specific examples.
6. Consider career opportunities or limitations for this person. Be prepared to discuss them.
7. Consider new goals for the next performance appraisal period. Be prepared to discuss them.

WATCH OUT FOR PITFALLS
AS YOU PREPARE!



PITFALLS TO AVOID

Factors that mislead or blind us when we are in the appraisal process are pitfalls to be avoided. An appraiser must be on guard against anything that distorts reality; favorably or unfavorably. Some typical pitfalls include:

- Bias/Prejudice. Things we tend to react to that have nothing to do with performance such as: race, religion, education, family background, age, physical handicaps, sexual preference and/or sex.
- Trait Assessment. Too much attention to characteristics that have nothing to do with the job and are difficult to measure. Examples include characteristics such as flexibility, sincerity, or friendliness.
- Over-emphasis on favorable or unfavorable performance of one or two tasks which could lead to an unbalanced evaluation of the overall contribution (particularly in the period just prior to the appraisal).
- Relying on impressions rather than facts.
- Holding the employee responsible for the impact of factors beyond his/her control.
- Failure to provide each employee with an opportunity for advance preparation.

CONCENTRATE ON PERFORMANCE MEASURED
AGAINST MUTUALLY UNDERSTOOD EXPECTATIONS.

In an appraisal discussion, four fundamental areas need to be covered:

1. The measurement of results of the employee's performance against goals and/or standards.
2. Recognition of the employee's contributions.
3. Correction of any new or on going performance problems.
4. The establishment of goals and or standards for the next appraisal period.

Everything of substance during the discussion should relate to these elements, and both parties should actively participate in the discussion. A plan, prepared in advance, will help keep the discussion on target.

DEVELOP
AN ACTION PLAN
FOR THE DISCUSSION



HOW TO DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

Once you have completed your planning review, you will need to develop an action plan for the appraisal. Keep the following guidelines in mind and check ☒ those you expect to use in your action plan.

- ☐ 1. Don't cover too many areas in any one discussion. Concentrate on those which deserve the most attention.
- ☐ 2. Make sure there are specific, unbiased examples that can be used to support your points but that also allow for dialogue.
- ☐ 3. Develop positive approaches to correcting problems. Give the employee an opportunity to suggest solutions before any final decisions are made.
- ☐ 4. Be prepared to provide praise and positive reinforcement for items which deserve it.
- ☐ 5. Identify developmental activities that will improve the employee's performance in the present assignment; and/or provide preparation for future assignments.
- ☐ 6. Plan to involve the employee in all aspects of the discussion.
- ☐ 7. Schedule a separate session to discuss any projects, goals and/or standards to be accomplished during the forthcoming appraisal period. Encourage employees to formulate their own goals. Discuss them and reach agreement on them during the session.

OUTSTANDING? SATISFACTORY?
UNSATISFACTORY?

Your conclusions from the evaluation should be a primary guide to structure the appraisal discussion. Read on for some suggested approaches.

HAVE YOUR DISCUSSION
OBJECTIVES WELL IN MIND AS
YOU PREPARE.

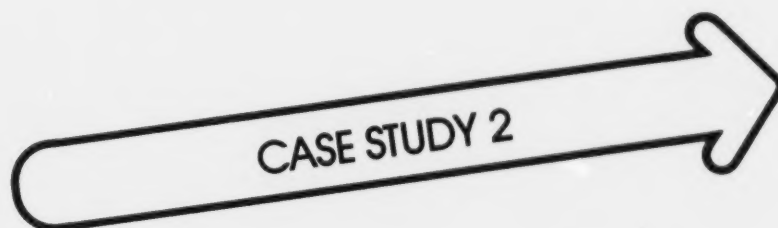


APPRAISAL DISCUSSION MODELS

Your overall evaluation of an employee may range from outstanding to unsatisfactory. Select an approach to your appraisal discussion that is in keeping with your evaluation. The employee, for example, may be outstanding in the current assignment; but not promotable because certain key skills are lacking or there are no higher level positions open or available. You have to decide how to handle each case. Following are some possible discussion models.

END RESULT OF EVALUATION	EMPLOYEE'S LIKELY FUTURE	DISCUSSION OBJECTIVE
Outstanding	Promotion	Consider opportunities
	Growth in present assignment	Make development plans
	Broadened Assignment	Review possibility of extending responsibility and assigning new duties
	No change in duties	How to maintain performance level
Satisfactory	Promotion	Consider possibilities
	Growth in present assignment	Make development plans
	No change in duties	How to maintain or improve performance level
Unsatisfactory	Performance correctible	Plan correction and gain commitment
	Performance uncorrectible	Review possible re-assignment, or prepare for termination

NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO APPLY WHAT YOU
HAVE READ. ANALYZE THE CASE STUDY ON THE
NEXT PAGE BASED ON WHAT YOU HAVE
LEARNED



CASE STUDY 2

WHAT UPSET JESS?

Darcy just completed a performance appraisal discussion with one of her employees and is upset about it. She told another supervisor at lunch, "I appraised Jess this morning. I had to call him out of the orientation planning meeting because I remembered all my appraisals were due today. I couldn't believe his reaction. He said he had no time to prepare, and expected me to have an example to support each criticism I made. About all he did, really, was to criticize my position on a couple of issues. I told him several things I didn't like about his performance, and then was good enough to tell him how to correct his faults. All I got back was anger and silence. You would think he would be grateful for some feedback, but I guess people today don't really care about improving. Normally he's a pretty good employee, but he was sure upset during the appraisal. What do you suppose is wrong with him anyway?"

Please use the space below to write down what you think is "wrong" with Jess. Check your answer with the author's on page 68.

PART III

CONDUCTING THE APPRAISAL



HOW TO BEGIN THE APPRAISAL DISCUSSION

Managers have the responsibility to initiate appraisal discussions. Although individual personalities will influence the format; experts agree the discussion should be held in a private place to avoid interruptions and should begin on a positive and friendly note. While chit-chat will help break the ice, both parties will welcome getting down to business.

One way to accomplish this is to highlight a specific positive achievement and discuss it first. Another approach is to ask the employee to review his or her accomplishments for the appraisal period. This allows the employee to select where to begin and can lead to a candid assessment of actual performance. While the employee is talking, the supervisor should listen carefully.

If variances between expectations and results are evident, it is important both supervisor and employee try to determine what they are and why they occurred. This helps the discussion become a joint problem solving session which can lead to the implementation of effective solutions.

The employee should be encouraged to identify as many reasons for variances as possible. None should be rejected out of hand even if they seem to be excuses. The supervisor should also contribute possible causes so nothing significant is overlooked. This sharing allows for an exchange of viewpoints. This can provide better insights for all concerned and lead to a new understanding of the expectations of the institution, and the people who staff it.

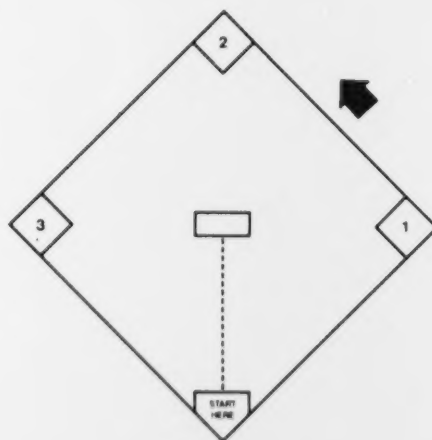
THE SUPERVISOR MUST BE SURE UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE IS IDENTIFIED AND DISCUSSED.

Experts believe that at least 50% of performance problems in business occur because of a lack of feedback. An employee will see no reason to change performance if it appears acceptable to the supervisor and organization.

Following are some ways to approach constructive feedback, and maintain a climate conducive to a win/win outcome.

NEVER IGNORE
UNSATISFACTORY
PERFORMANCE!

YOU MAKE IT TO SECOND BASE WHEN BOTH PARTIES FREELY COMMUNICATE ALL ASPECTS OF THE JOB. IT'S NOT AS EASY AS IT SOUNDS!



DISCUSSING UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE

Employees who work in a non-threatening atmosphere are more likely to discuss their shortcomings in the appraisal setting. When this occurs, the supervisor can be supportive by saying something like, "Thank you for your comments. What can we do to correct this situation?"

If the employee has been unsatisfactory in an aspect of his or her job, and does not bring up areas of weak performance, the supervisor must do so. It helps to be able to describe the impact of the poor performance on the office and the institution.

Some employees may not realize they are falling short of expectations. Or they may assume everything is acceptable because no one has ever discussed the problem with them. Sometimes they may feel everything is O.K. because they see others doing the same thing.

A first step to correct unsatisfactory performance is to review expectations. If the employee is unaware of these expectations, they must be made clear, and a commitment made that they will be met. If expectations are not being met for some other reason, the supervisor must first learn why, and then agree on a corrective action plan worked out with the employee.

Questions like these can be helpful in opening up the issues:

"Are you aware of the standards for reviewing applications?"

"Are you aware of your error rate versus the office average?"

"We seem to be running about two weeks behind schedule in completing enrollment verifications, can you tell me why, and what we can do to catch up?"

"Your recruitment reports on deposits are excellent but they are never on time. Can you explain why?"

"Fifty percent of your staff resigned in the past year. To what do you attribute that?"

SUCCESSFUL SUPERVISORS BELIEVE EMPLOYEES SHOULD DO MOST OF THE TALKING. THIS CAN BE ACHIEVED BY USING GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS, AND AN ATMOSPHERE THAT ENCOURAGES DISCUSSION.

WAYS TO GET AN EMPLOYEE TO TALK



HOW TO GET AN EMPLOYEE TO TALK FREELY

Employees often say very little during an appraisal discussion. There are several possible reasons for this, some include:

- The employee does not understand the purpose of the appraisal, and is afraid to express an opinion.
- The employee is not given the opportunity to express an opinion.
- The employee was not given time to prepare for the discussion.
- The employee's thoughts and ideas are quickly brushed aside or discounted.
- The employee feels the whole process is meaningless.

A manager can overcome this reluctance to enter into a dialogue by creating the right type of non-threatening atmosphere. Check ☒ those methods you expect to use.

- ☐ 1. **BE DESCRIPTIVE RATHER THAN JUDGMENTAL.** When a supervisor is judgmental about an employee's performance, it almost always brings out defensive behavior. A better climate is established when descriptive terms are used to describe problems. This makes it possible for the supervisor and employee to unemotionally discuss a solution, or even better, a solution generated by the employee. Note the differences in the following example:

JUDGMENTAL

"How could you do such a dumb thing?"

DESCRIPTIVE

"Can you explain what caused the incident?"

Supervisors who use descriptive, non-judgmental language in the appraisal discussion show a desire to analyze and resolve a problem, not find a scapegoat or way to demean the employee.

- ☐ 2. **BE SUPPORTIVE, NOT AUTHORITARIAN.** Supervisors sometimes purposely, and sometimes inadvertently, display an authoritarian attitude during the discussion. This can create resentment and defensiveness. It is usually better to respect the employee's ability to contribute to the solution of a problem. Here is an example.

AUTHORITARIAN

SUPPORTIVE

"Here is what we will do to get this done on time."

"What do you suggest we do to get this done on time in the future?"

Supportive practices generate options for problem-solving because the employee is encouraged to make suggestions. They also focus on the problem, not the employee. In addition, a supportive approach promotes better listening by both parties, and permits a climate where disagreement is not only acceptable, but invited.

- ☐ 3. **REFLECT EQUALITY, NOT SUPERIORITY.** Supervisors who put too much emphasis on their position and power often create barriers between themselves and their employees. Supervisors who share information with employees and then seek their opinions provide a flavor of equality. Here is an example:

SUPERIORITY

EQUALITY

"I was doing it this way before you were born."

"We have done it this way for years but I would like to hear your ideas on how we can do it better."

Employees appreciate a supervisor who shares information, asks for opinions and listens to ideas. Supervisors who understand this have appraisal discussions that are more enlightening and productive.

- ☐ 4. **BE ACCEPTING, NOT DOGMATIC.** Supervisors who approach decisions, plans and problems dogmatically are telling employees there is no need for other ideas or solutions. Things have already been decided. This can demoralize an employee who has ideas and wants to excel. Supervisors who listen to employee input, or allow their ideas to be challenged in a search for the best solution, stimulate enthusiasm, creativity and productivity. Here is an example that contrasts the two approaches:

DOGMATIC

"This is the best solution."

ACCEPTING

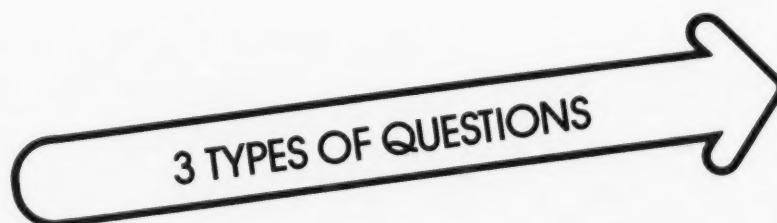
This is the best solution I could come up with. What other possibilities do you see?"

A supervisor who accepts employee's input recognizes their value, capitalizes on their knowledge and builds confidence in the group.

SUPERVISORS LEARN MORE
FROM LISTENING THAN
TALKING!

THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS CAN PROVIDE SOME VERY IMPORTANT SIDE BENEFITS, BECAUSE:

- They require the supervisor's commitment to listen.
- They stimulate thought about specific issues.
- They solicit another person's ideas, point of view or feelings.
- They provide an opportunity to test an idea against the reasoning of someone else.
- They elicit important information that might not otherwise be available.



QUESTIONS THAT FACILITATE APPRAISAL DISCUSSIONS

There are three types of questions that can be used to help the supervisor and employee better understand each other's point of view. Check ☒ those you would feel comfortable using.

- ☐ 1. **OPEN QUESTIONS**—Questions which cannot be answered with a yes or no. These questions require an opinion or expression of feelings. For example: "What is your opinion of . . . ?" "How do you feel about . . . ?" "What do you think caused . . . ?"

Advantages of open questions include:

- a demonstration of your interest in the other person's point of view;
- a confirmation that you value the other person's ideas and feelings;
- a stimulation of thought about specific issues;
- a better understanding of the other person's needs;
- the encouragement of a dialogue rather than a monologue.

- ☐ 2. **REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**—A reflective question repeats a statement the other person has made in the form of a question. Good listening skills are required. It is also important to select the most significant feeling or idea stated. For example:

Employee: "Our results would be better if we modified the procedures used to keep records of inquirers."

Supervisor: "You're convinced the results can be improved?"

Reflective questions can be helpful because:

- arguments can be avoided. You respond without accepting or rejecting what has been said.
- it confirms you understand what has been said. If you reflect incorrectly, the other party has an opportunity to correct you.
- the other person is encouraged to clarify or expand upon what has been said.
- the other person can recognize illogical statements they may have made if the statement comes back in a non-directive fashion.
- they create a dialogue conducive for agreement.

- ☐ 3. **DIRECTIVE QUESTIONS**—These are used to solicit information about a particular point or issue. Directive questions are usually reserved until after the other person has finished talking on the subject. Directive questions can then be used to sustain communication, or obtain information or ideas in which you are specifically interested. Here is an example:

Supervisor—"If you are convinced the results can be improved, what steps would you take and when would you take them?"

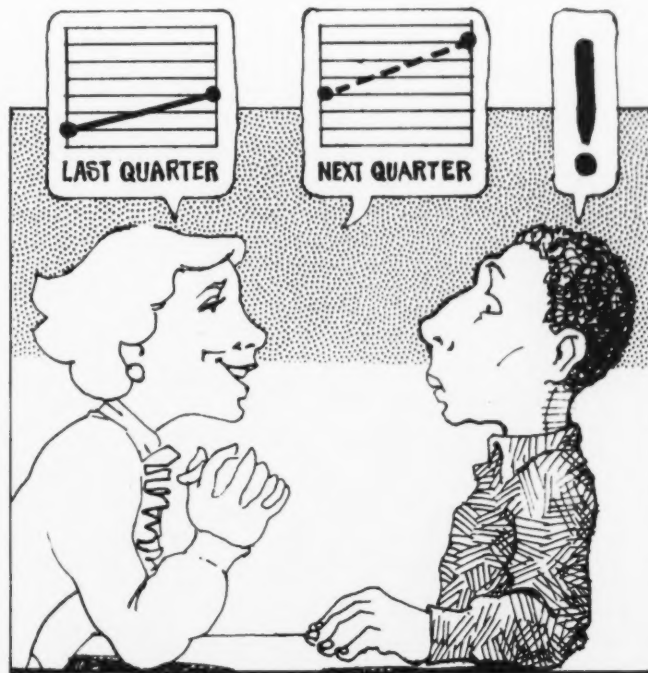
Directive questions have these advantages:

- They provide pertinent information in those areas of greatest importance to you.
- They challenge the other person to explore ideas, defend statements, and contribute suggestions.
- They offer both parties specific facts on an issue.

Open, reflective and directive questions are all useful techniques to draw the employee into a thorough discussion of job performance and personal development.

The appraisal discussion is more than a simple review of job performance. It should progress naturally to a discussion of how the employee can do a better job in the future.

It is also a good time to draw out the employee's ambitions and aspirations.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

As performance is discussed, it often becomes apparent that additional training and development is required or desirable. It is also possible the discussion will provide an indication that an employee is ready for more responsibility which requires new or improved skills.

Therefore, specific areas for improvement, and the need for new skill development should be discussed. Techniques by which further growth can be accomplished should also be covered. The supervisor should encourage the employee to talk about personal growth needs, so goals to meet them can be established. This effort can be supported by:

- Serving as a sounding board to explore developmental alternatives.
- Testing the extent to which the employee has thought through developmental objectives.
- Providing a supportive climate for learning.

The final employee development plans should be specific and include agreement by the employee for:

- What the employee needs to do.
- When the employee needs to do it.
- What the supervisor needs to do and when.
- Once development is completed, how it is to be applied.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION LEADER

The appraiser's attitude toward the appraisal discussion will make a genuine difference in the outcome. A well led session provides an opportunity to share ideas, points of view, and discuss problems and successes. Examine your attitude on the next page.



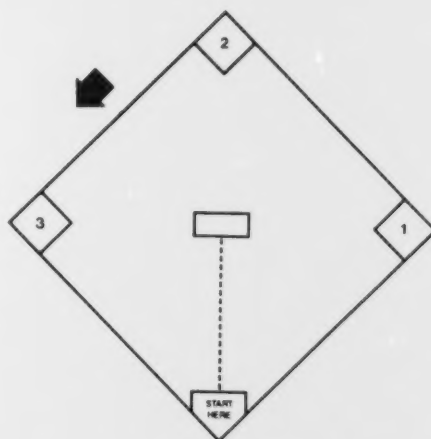
SUPERVISOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

The following characteristics describe ideal supervisor performance appraisal behavior. For each statement, determine which response describes your behavior and circle the appropriate number. When you have finished, total the numbers circled in the space provided.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. I let the employee do most of the talking.			
2. I make an intense effort to listen to the employee's ideas.	5	3	1
3. I am prepared to suggest solutions to problems and development needs but let the employee contribute first.	5	3	1
4. My statements about performance are descriptive, not judgmental.	5	3	1
5. I reinforce the positives in performance as well as seeking ways to eliminate the negatives.	5	3	1
6. I try to support the employee's ideas rather than force my own.	5	3	1
7. I invite alternatives rather than assume there is only one way to approach an issue.	5	3	1
8. I use open-ended, reflective and directive questions to stimulate discussion.	5	3	1
9. I am specific and descriptive when I express a concern about performance.	5	3	1
10. My employees know I want them to succeed.	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>
TOTAL _____			

A score between 45 and 50 indicates you should be leading successful discussions. Scores between 35 and 44 indicate significant strengths plus a few improvement needs. A score between 25 and 34 reflects some strengths, but a significant number of problem areas as well. Scores below 25 call for a serious effort to improve in several categories. Make a special effort to improve in any behavior where you scored 1 regardless of your total score.

YOU ARRIVE AT THIRD BASE WHEN BOTH PARTIES AGREE ON A PERFORMANCE PLAN FOR THE NEXT PERIOD AND SUMMARIZE THESE AGREEMENTS.



CLOSING THE APPRAISAL DISCUSSION

When the supervisor and employee have concluded discussion of past performance, addressed any development needs and established new goals and/or standards for the future; they need to take time to review these agreements and plans. Many performance reviews fail because participants end the session with differing perceptions about what was accomplished and what was agreed. To prevent this the supervisor should conclude the discussion by:

1. Summarizing what has been discussed and agreed. This should be done positively and enthusiastically.
2. Giving the employee a chance to react, question, and add additional ideas and suggestions.
3. Expressing appreciation for the employee's participation and reinforcing the commitment to future plans.
4. Following the discussion with a written record of the agreements and/or required action plans.

**EMPLOYEE RESPONSE TO THE
APPRAISAL MAY DIFFER FROM
WHAT YOU EXPECT**

It is a good idea therefore to give some thought to the range of possible responses in advance, and make plans accordingly.

How would you respond to the employee behavior described in the following case situations.

CASE SITUATIONS

Here are some situations about ways employees responded to their appraisal. After reading each example, indicate how you would react.

SITUATION 1

The employee agrees with the appraisal and wants to improve. Some genuine differences of opinion are expressed, but the employee makes positive efforts to clarify the issues rather than be defensive.

YOUR RESPONSE _____

SITUATION 2

The employee does not accept responsibility for his substandard performance and blames company politics and other employees.

YOUR RESPONSE _____

SITUATION 3

The employee disagrees with elements of your appraisal and offers specific information to refute your findings.

YOUR RESPONSE _____

SITUATION 4

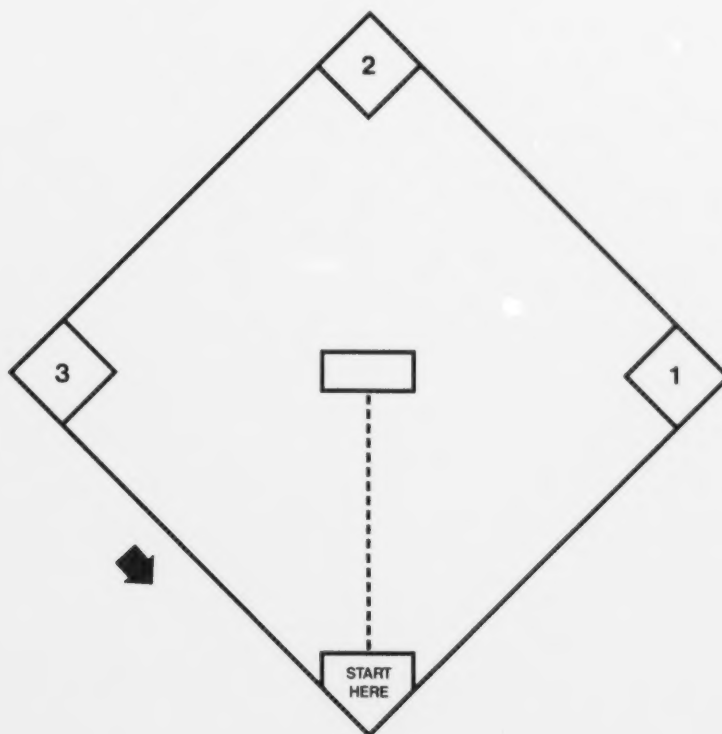
The employee accepts the appraisal without saying a word and prepares to leave before you have discussed the next performance plan.

YOUR RESPONSE _____

Compare your response with the author on page 68 and 69.

PART IV

FOLLOWING-UP



YOU SCORE WHEN A POST APPRAISAL
ANALYSIS REFLECTS A JOB WELL DONE BY
BOTH PARTIES

FOLLOWING-UP—THREE SUGGESTIONS

1 WRITTEN RECORDS

Once the performance appraisal discussion has been concluded, a manager should immediately make a written record of:

- the overall appraisal for the previous period;
- goals which both parties agreed to;
- any personal commitments requiring specific future action.
- any plans for continuing on-the-job follow-up.

A copy of this summary should be given to the employee.

2 REFLECTION

Following each review is a good time to review your performance in leading the discussion. Some good questions are:

- What was done well?
- What was done poorly?
- What will be done differently next time?
- Does the employee know where he or she stands?

3 FOLLOW THROUGH

The final element of a good performance appraisal is appropriate follow-up to make sure agreements and commitments are kept and goals achieved. This follow-up logically sets the stage for the next appraisal period. Effective evaluation of employee performance involves daily monitoring and frequent feedback to the employee. If this is not done, the occasional performance appraisal loses its ability to improve performance.

A PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL CHECK LIST

The following check list is designed to guide the supervisor in preparing for employee performance appraisal discussions.

I. PREPARATION

- ☐ I have reviewed mutually understood expectations with respect to job duties, projects, goals, standards, and any other pre-determined performance factors pertinent to this appraisal discussion.
- ☐ I have observed job performance measured against mutually understood expectations. In so doing, I have done my best to avoid such pitfalls as:
 - _____ Bias/prejudice
 - _____ The vagaries of memory
 - _____ Over-attention to some aspects of the job at the expense of others
 - _____ Being overly influenced by my own experience
 - _____ Trait evaluation rather than performance measurement
- ☐ I have reviewed the employee's background including:
 - _____ Skills
 - _____ Work experience
 - _____ Training
- ☐ I have determined the employee's performance strengths and areas in need of improvement and in so doing have:
 - _____ Accumulated specific, unbiased documentation that can be used to help communicate my position
 - _____ Limited myself to those critical points that are the most important
 - _____ Prepared a possible development plan in case the employee needs assistance in coming up with a suitable plan
- ☐ I have identified areas for concentration in setting goals and standards for the next appraisal period.
- ☐ I have given the employee advance notice of when the discussion will be held so that he/she can prepare.
- ☐ I have set aside an adequate block of uninterrupted time to permit a full and complete discussion.

II. CONDUCTING THE APPRAISAL DISCUSSION

- ☐ I plan to begin the discussion by creating a sincere, but open and friendly atmosphere. This includes:
 - _____ Reviewing the purpose of the discussion
 - _____ Making it clear that it is a joint discussion for the purpose of mutual problem-solving and goal setting
 - _____ Striving to put the employee at ease
- ☐ In the body of the discussion I intend to keep the focus on job performance and related factors. This includes:
 - _____ Discussing job requirements—employee strengths, accomplishments, improvement needs and evaluating results of performance against objectives set during previous reviews and discussions
 - _____ Being prepared to cite observations for each point I want to discuss
 - _____ Encouraging the employee to appraise his/her own performance
 - _____ Using open, reflective and directive questions to promote thought, understanding and problem solving
- ☐ I will encourage the employee to outline his/her personal plans for self-development before suggesting ideas of my own. In the process, I will:
 - _____ Try to get the employee to set personal growth and improvement targets
 - _____ Strive to reach agreement on appropriate development plans which detail what the employee intends to do, a timetable and support I am prepared to give
- ☐ I am prepared to discuss work assignments, projects and goals for the next appraisal period and will ask the employee to come prepared with suggestions.

III. CLOSING THE DISCUSSION

- ☐ I will be prepared to make notes during the discussion for the purpose of summarizing agreements and follow up. In closing, I will:
 - _____ Summarize what has been discussed
 - _____ Show enthusiasm for plans that have been made
 - _____ Give the employee an opportunity to make additional suggestions
 - _____ End on a positive, friendly, harmonious note

IV. POST APPRAISAL FOLLOW UP

- ☐ As soon as the discussion is over, I will record the goal set, points requiring follow up, the commitments I made, and provide a copy for the employee.
- ☐ I will also evaluate how I handled the discussion.
 - _____ What I did well
 - _____ What I could have done better
 - _____ What I learned about the employee and his/her job
 - _____ What I learned about myself and my job

REFLECT FOR A MOMENT ON WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN LEARNING – THEN DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN TO APPLY THE CONCEPTS. THE GUIDE ON THE NEXT PAGE MAY HELP.

Think over the material in this book: the self-analysis questionnaires; the case studies; and the reinforcement exercises. What did you learn about performance appraisals? What did you learn about yourself? How can you apply what you learned? Make a commitment to become better at performance appraisals. Design a personal action plan to help accomplish this goal.

The action plan on the facing page may help clarify your goals, and outline appropriate action to achieve those goals.

A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

1. My appraisal skills are strong in the following areas:

2. I need to improve the following appraisal skills:

3. My appraisal improvement goals are: (Be sure they are specific, attainable and measurable.)

4. Here are my action steps to accomplish my goals.

NAME

AUTHOR'S SUGGESTED ANSWERS TO CASES

CASE STUDY 1

WHO WILL BE BEST AT PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS? (page 13)

With proper training and guidance, Janice and Fletcher may both become excellent at performance appraisal. At this point, however, Janice has better instincts about how an appraisal should be approached. Employees need to know what is expected of them. When employees have an opportunity to participate in establishing goals and standards they usually make good contributions. Contrary to Fletcher's assumption, employees tend to set goals and standards too high rather than too low.

CASE STUDY 2

WHAT UPSET JESS (page 37)

Jess may be upset because Darcy seems to have an attitude that reflects "I know best—what could you possibly contribute to this discussion of your performance?" Jess was asked to leave a meeting to come in for his appraisal discussion. This may have embarrassed him. It also suggests the discussion had not been scheduled in advance so he had no opportunity to prepare. Darcy's approach seems to be "here's what is wrong and here's what to do about it." Jess has no opportunity for questions or input. How would you react under similar circumstances?

SITUATION 1 (page 58)

Express gratitude for the employee's active participation. This employee has voiced the expected response if you follow the process described in this book. Most employees want information about their strengths and weaknesses, and how to invest their time more profitably for improvement. Don't forget the importance of sincere praise when it is earned.

SITUATION 2 (page 59)

Listen with an open mind. Without interrupting or arguing, try to find out why the person is placing the blame elsewhere. Then move the discussion toward corrective action that can be achieved with the employee's cooperation.

Compliment the employee anytime a move is made toward accepting responsibility. Follow up closely and schedule another review soon to measure changes in the employee's point of view.

SITUATION 3 (page 59)

Listen carefully to the employee. Then indicate your willingness to re-examine your data. If it develops the employee's information is more valid than yours, modify your position accordingly. If you believe the employee's data is invalid, or irrelevant, stand your ground and explain your position.

SITUATION 4 (page 59)

Some individuals are intimidated by the appraisal process and a special effort is required to open things up. Others may feel a quick agreement will save them from a discussion of their faults. When employees are reluctant to talk, encourage them by asking questions. Ask them to suggest activities which would help them. Ask them to summarize their performance. Ask their conclusions at the end of the session. Insure they provide input on their new performance plan.

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